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nearly realized than in any European country where the government is avowedly Catholic.

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9.—*Alphonse Daudet. Le Nabab. Mœurs Parisiennes. Septième édition. Paris: G. Charpentier. 1877. 12mo, pp. 508.*

THE extraordinary run which M. Daudet's novels are having, not merely in the author's country, but everywhere that either French or English is read, justifies us in examining with some care the causes of their popularity. With regard to "The Nabob," it lies to a great extent on the surface. The characters are taken from people still living, or only lately dead, and well known in Paris or the world over for their crimes, their extravagant luxury, or their close connection with a fallen dynasty. With such *dramatis personæ* he must be a poor novelist who could not give his story a more than usual interest. If we were to imagine novel-writing as a form of fiction in vogue in the days of the Augustan Empire, it would not have needed the style of a Sallust to induce Romans to read a story in which Catiline, Cæsar, and Cicero figured; and, though there is certainly a wide interval between the Empire of the Cæsars and the Third Empire of France, there was still enough pomp, if not greatness, and notoriety, if not renown, in the reign of the third Napoleon, to make any story connected with the doings of his court interesting. M. Daudet brings down great game. In *Mora*, we have an unmistakable likeness of Morny; in "The Nabob," a photograph of a character well known in Paris; in *Jenkins*, a man distinguished in two countries; in *Hemerlingue*, a money-lender almost as well known as the Rothschilds. In a note at the end of the volume the public is informed that the publisher is authorized by the author "to declare that the scenes in the book relating to Tunis are altogether imaginary, and that he never had any intention of portraying any functionary of that state." The suggestion that the book had created a sensation among the Tunisian functionaries, and that this note was therefore necessary to put the author right with the Tunisian public, is, in a small way, no bad illustration of M. Daudet's delicate humor.

But M. Daudet is far from needing any adventitious aids to the interest of his readers. "The Nabob" would be a good novel, if there had never been any third Empire, and if all the characters had been purely imaginary. The author is probably the cleverest of all the modern school of French novelists, a school for pure cleverness more distinguished even than any of its brilliant predecessors. We say

cleverness, as distinguished from genius. The *feu sacré* of Hugo, of George Sand, of Balzac, has not been kept burning for such writers as Cherbuliez, or Droz, or Daudet. But Cherbuliez, or Droz, or Daudet, can each in his different way attempt and succeed in feats of literary skill which those predecessors never would have attempted. In the previous generation there was, in each case, an inspiration. Each novelist of those we have named had a message for the world, which he delivered—a message almost as distinct in French fiction as that of Thackeray or Dickens in English. The new school, or rather the new men—for there is no school—have no message to deliver; but, finding to their hands the form of the novel handed down to them, have set industriously to work to do with it whatever they could accomplish. The result is, productions of all kinds, and of extraordinary cleverness. It is quite safe, too, to say that the new French novel is distinguished from the old in being less purely national; that is, it is not difficult to trace the influence of other literature upon it. Such writers as Victor Hugo, George Sand, and Balzac, alike in nothing else, were alike in being thoroughly French. They are all nearly untranslatable. Such writers as Droz, Daudet, and Cherbuliez, are not only translatable, but do very well in translations. In Daudet we can trace almost in particular sentences and paragraphs the influence of Dickens in France, which those who have read M. Jules Janin know must be an influence of very recent date. In the character of good M. Joyeuse we have a genuine touch of Dickens.

M. Daudet, however, holds himself out, if we may use the expression, as a realist. We have some indications of what his powers are in this way in "The Nabob." In the suicide of Monpavon and the horrible description of the "*Œuvre de Bethléem*" we have realism at its acutest. But M. Daudet is much too clever to give himself up to realism, or to anything, completely. He can be by turns realist, idealist, humorist, and—shall we say it?—sensationalist. His humor is far greater than that of any modern French novelist that we know of, and, curiously enough, as we just now hinted, it is to a great extent not only French wit, with which we are so familiar, but also the real English humor of character—the humor that delights in sympathetic reproduction of all types, bad and good, not from an ideal or even strictly real point of view, but from that point which humor alone supplies. The "*Mémoires d'un Garçon de Bureau*" which run through "The Nabob," the story of the financial operations of the *Caisse Territoriale*, corresponding with the

"Anglo-Indian" institution, presided over by Montague Tigg and his friend Mr. Jonas in "Martin Chuzzlewit," are conceived and executed in a vein of which it would be difficult to find other examples in French fiction. The entertainment given by M. Noël to his fellow-servants, we can hardly avoid considering a French edition of the servants' "swarry" in "Pickwick" (not that we mean to imply any plagiarism), and the "Mémoires" from beginning to end are the most capital possible comic foil to the tragedy of the main story. The last touch, in which the nearly ruined old *garçon de bureau*, who has seen his substance slowly frittered away by the brilliant swindlers in whose employment he has been living, who has seen the great bank collapse into utter nothingness before his eyes, and yet who has acquired a taste for speculation which has entered into his very constitution, closes his diary, is full of a delicate humor and appreciation of character which we come upon in a French novel with equal surprise and pleasure.

But granting M. Daudet all imaginable cleverness and an extraordinary fund of humor, what is it in his novel that to Anglo-Saxon readers at least is displeasing? There is something that grates upon us throughout. It is certainly not a want of morality; for there could be nothing purer, more moral than the whole story. It is the story of virtue rewarded, of vice punished; and not only that, but the rewards and punishments are meted out in accordance with the laws which usually determine the results of human action; there is therefore nothing offensive in the morality. It is, we think, because there is so little that is interesting in any of the characters of the book. With the exception of the Nabob, who unquestionably arouses our interest, the characters are repulsive. Mora is an elegant *roué*, who, with shattered constitution, keeps himself alive on Jenkins's pills, to fill the public eye for a brief space, and to seduce the heroine; Jenkins is a quack, without a single redeeming quality; Hemerlingue is an unregenerate money-changer, introduced chiefly to rival and ruin the Nabob; Felicia is a Bohemian, who allows Mora to ruin her—we do not understand whether to pay her debts, or out of pique at the neglect of Paul de Géry. Paul himself is a model young man, devoted to his chief, but we feel that he must have been engaged in pretty dirty business for him. Indeed, considering the operations most of the characters are occupied with, the extreme goodness of Paul is a little mawkish, and affects us somewhat as we might be affected by that of a young man who is everything to his

mother and sisters, but who, we find, derives his income from the position of *croupier* at a gambling-house.

Having said this, we feel that we are unduly finding fault with a book of extraordinary ability. For a picture of Paris under the third Napoleon, there can be little doubt that "The Nabob" will remain unapproached and unapproachable. Every feature of the society of which this court was the centre we have here—the luxury, the waste, the vice, the show, the hollowness. It is painted not from the inside, but from without, by a cold and truthful observer. The book is at once a novel and a sermon. *Vanitas vanitatum!* echoes through its pages with a sad refrain; and, as we see the long procession of notorious characters pass before us to their common doom of bankruptcy, ruin, and suicide, we cannot but feel that the unseen hand that pulls the wires is that of a master who has read the human heart as it is given to few men to read it.